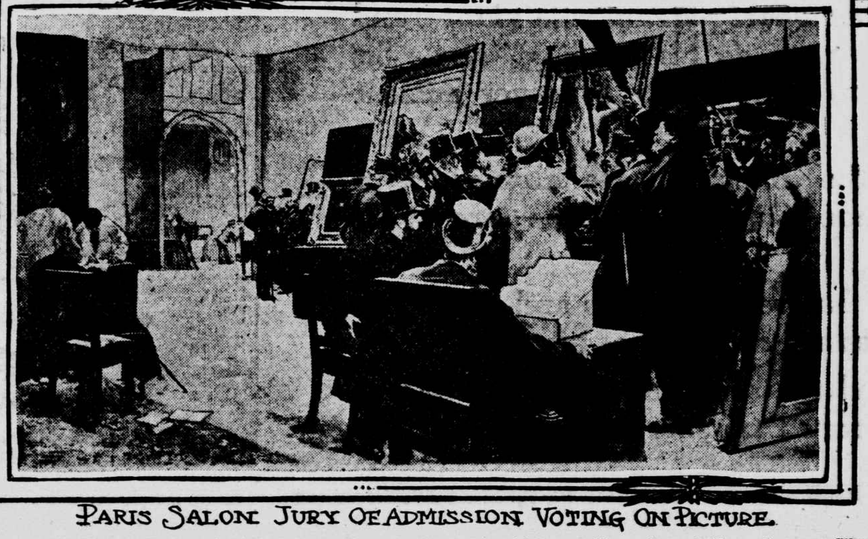
DOES AMERICAN ART PAY?

PROMENADE AND ENTRANCE TO THE PARIS SALON

ALBERT GIHON IN HIS PARIS STUDIO



PARIS SALON JURY OF ADMISSION VOTING ON PICTURE.

PARIS Connoisseurs Cite Big Prices—Visit to the Studio of Albert Gihon—"American Paintings Will Rise Higher Than French in Twenty-five Years"—A Collector Who Buys Only "Young Americans"—Ours the Coming Land of Art.

Special Correspondence of The Star.

PARIS, May 1, 1912.

WITH the spring salons opening, and the world still surprised at the great prices of recent art sales, the question rises everywhere:

"Who are the Corots of tomorrow?" among the mass of known and unknown painters in the salons which will rise 10,000 per cent in value twenty years hence?

There are many Americans in the salons. Do they sell their pictures? Will their prices increase? Does it pay American boys and girls to go in for art as a profitable profession?

Yes, American art pays.

American painters and sculptors are not saying much about it, but many are getting big prices, all sell better yearly, and the rise in values which connoisseurs see coming is of sensational proportions.

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Recently an international collector who has taken to buying up "young Americans" right and left said:

"The Corots of tomorrow are Americans. Some may be unknown young fellows, just getting into the salons and home exhibitions. But which? Perhaps many, some of whom are already well known. Their work is more virile, and they have a fresher eye. Their color is as good, and their technique is perhaps better than the Europeans; nor have they the 'cookery' of European painters, but are genuine, original and individual."

As to their selling values, he said:

"American pictures are the best investment young buyers can make. You see, it is too early for the great dealers to 'run' them. But America is the coming land of art, and when they begin buying more on their own taste, over there, you will see the prices shoot up."

With this I began an inquiry which led me far. In time it took me to the studio of Albert Gihon, the American landscape painter, who was showing his new pictures before they went to the old (and original) salon.

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Albert Gihon, formerly of Washington, D. C., and San Francisco, is a personage, in his Paris studio and country place at Montigny on the Loing. Landscapes by Gihon adorn the collections of the Czar of Russia, the Emperor of Germany, the Prince of Monaco and H. R. H. Prince Charles de Bourbon.

Among his American admirers are former United States Senator William A. Clark (portrait of his niece, Miss Anita Abascal), United States Senator Simon Guggenheim (Wanamaker prize picture), Perry Belmont, Oliver Hazard P. Belmont, Samuel Newhouse of Utah, the late Col. H. B. Wilson of New York, Henry Hayes of the Detroit Museum, Charles Deering, Harry Beekman, Samuel and Isaac Untermyer and their colleague Peter Zucker, Charles Stix of St. Louis, Sir William Van Horn, president of the Canadian Pacific railway, and the late R. F. Foster of Washington.

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In Europe Gihon's pictures hang in the galleries of the Dutch collector, Lee Nardus; the Russian and German collectors, Count Raczyski of Warsaw and Baron von Hengenscheidt of Berlin; Count Ronne of Brussels, Lord William Charles Peel, Sir James Home, Bart., Prince Rospigliosi, Lars Anderson, United States minister to Belgium, and B. J. Shoninger and S. B. Veit, president and secretary of the American Chamber of Commerce of Paris.

I have sought out these names because their variety is typical of the vogue of many American painters.

Also, Gihon is, personally, typical of the American youth who goes on his own, without state aid or patronage. At the age of twenty he was drawing for the San Francisco Chronicle, Examiner and Journal of Commerce, with only three months' previous study at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia. The work of such a newspaper designer includes much intricate architectural perspective of towns and cities. Young Gihon did the Pacific coast from Vancouver and Victoria, B. C., to Panama, earning $100 per week and all expenses paid when away from San Francisco.

After two years of that delightful life—as he still looks back on it—he came east to New York and started to work with Louis C. Tiffany, the decorator, at $460 per month. After two years he took contracts on his own account, but he burned to study painting in Paris. He had saved enough money, and he came.

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Gihon's life seems to go by periods of two years. After two years at the Julian Academy of Paris he began to paint and sell landscapes and portraits. At the end of two years he was in the Salon. In two years more he was exhibiting at all the annual exhibitions of the principal American and European cities, with a price and a vogue that continued the two years' jumps.

"Does American art pay?" he repeated my question. "I am not complaining. I am not cooped up in a thirty-three-story skyscraper, but enjoy a fine life in Paris and all the open air I want at Montigney, and sell my pictures as I paint them. Tell American boys and girls to go ahead, if they love art. Don't be afraid. They will get better prices every year. I know of one painter who took $7 for his first picture. He now gets $1,200 apiece."

"Yet American painters' prices have not jumped up," I said, "like——"

"Like whose?" he interrupted. "Do you know the prices Corot got while living? The selling values of American painters cannot be judged, because they have not lived long enough yet. The pictures are not old enough. I ignore the Hudson River School, it was very primitive; but the work of American painters of the past twenty-five years, look you—twenty-five years hence, that work will rise in art sale prices higher than the corresponding work of foreign artists!"

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"But what about that collection of American paintings made by William Chase, some of which I hear sold moderately at New York the other day?" I asked.

"That is just it," said Gihon. "Twenty-five years from now those same pictures will fetch very big prices."

You cannot persuade a painter to talk prices and names together. I could not get a word out of Gihon as to the present prices of his brethren; nor was it necessary. In my inquiry apart from him I learned all that was necessary to outline the boom which some are already beginning to enjoy.

For example, my original informant, although he plunges principally on "young Americans," estimates Alexander Harrison between $1,500 and $1,700. Twenty-five years ago Harrison probably accepted $200 for more than one picture. Louis Ashton Knight gets $1,200 for a landscape. Gari Melchers, who twenty-five years ago was probably glad to take $200, now gets up to $1,600 and $1,700 for "those Dutch things of his." George Hitchcock, for his Dutch things, often receives $2,000. Edwin Connell, the cattle painter, gets handsome prices—I could not find an exact figure. So with Bisbing, "when he condescends to sell." Like Harrison, Bisbing puts a price on his picture, and will not lower a dollar.

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Here and there, among collectors and dealers, I found other data. Robert W. Van Boskerck of Hackensack, N. J., paints principally in France. For his first pictures he accepted almost anything. Those who snapped them up for $25 apiece and more blush today at the thought of it, but they are glad of their speculation. Today Van Boskerck never sells for less than $800, and asks and obtains from $1,100 to $1,300 for a fine picture. Others who have gone away up—none attaining anything like their final values—are the painters Samuel Montgomery Roosevelt, cousin of the ex-President; Herbert W. Faulkner, the Venetian painter; Clarence Gihon, brother of Albert, and Seymour Thomas of Alabama, who paints his portraits here in Paris. Americans cross over to be painted by Thomas, who gets big prices—equally big—from them and from Europeans.

Like Seymour Thomas and the two Gihons, Faulkner painted and sold abroad—often to traveling Americans—better perhaps that at home; but he has now returned to live in the United States, not wishing to educate his children abroad. Clarence Gihon certainly gets five or ten times the prices he commanded five years ago—this, always, in Paris. Victor D. Hecht of New York, brother-in-law of Samuel Untermyer, paints his high-priced portraits equally in New York and Paris. Van Boskerck sells largely at home, going all over the United States on trips.

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I asked Gihon about selling abroad and at home.

"Many Americans like to buy abroad," he said. "They want an artistic souvenir of their trip, or they like to buy in Paris from the salon or in the painter's studio, or they like European subjects—seen through the eyes of an American painter. I have exhibited landscapes at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, the New York Society of American Artists and the Chicago Institute. Some sold, some came back to me in Paris. Well, those same landscapes have been bought, at my studioo or at Knoedler s, in the Place Vendome, by Americans who saw but did not buy them in Philadelphia, New York or Chicago."

Gihon looks on it as rather temporary and personal. America is the great field of the future for American painters. Even today, students have no need to come to Paris—unless for prestige—to begin selling.

Carolus-Duran said recently to Gihon:

"Young Americans do not need to come to Paris nowadays to study—with the beautiful landscapes you have at home, and art schools as good as any."

Carolus-Duran referred particularly to the art schools of Philadelphia, New York, Cincinnati and Chicago. Buotet de Monvel declares the school at Cincinnati one of the finest in the world.

"Aman-Jean told me," says Gihon, "that the Art Students' League in New York was a revelation to him; and he had not sufficient words to praise the Art School of Chicago. As to the yearly exhibition of the Carnegie Institute of Pittsburgh, Aman-Jean—veteran French master—has pronounced it to be ahead of either of the Paris salons, for the two considerations that it has an interhational jury, not open to wire-pulling or 'pistonnage,' and that the greatest painters of the world exhibit in it."

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I find this annual Pittsburgh salon looked on generally in Paris as a fine example of the growing American art interest all over the country.

"The greatest painters of the world really do compete at Pittsburgh," said Gihon, "and when you get a prize there it carries a heavy sum of money with it. I assure you, the foreign celebrities are struck when asked to sit on its jury—have their steamer, railway and hotel bills all paid, bring their wives and children if they want to, and if any have pictures with them they are sure to be bought by the institute!"

An American collector who was present laughed.

"With all those magnificent exhibitions under their eyes," he said, "the rich people of Pittsburgh do not buy a thing, unless it be, now and then, a great foreign name. It is notorious that the pictures are bought by visitors from other parts of the United States!"

"Without exaggerating, there is truth in what you say," admitted Gihon. "There are millionaires out there who will take you around in their automobiles and spend $200 a day on you, and then leave some college professor to buy your picture. It is not always the very rich who buy most readily. There is a constantly increasing class of cultured, well-fixed Americans, but not enormously wealthy, which buys two or three good pictures a year, take a lot of pleasure in it, and think it over a lot in advance. Many are college professors—I have frequently sold to such. It is true, often their wives have money."

The American collector agreed.

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"They are the beginning of the great American appreciation," he said. "I am something in that line myself, so I can speak. And, slightly lower in fortune, there is also a large and increasing class of cultured Americans who can pay $150 or $200 for a picture. They are not rich. Often they save up, or deprive themselves. Well, they are getting good things. Their children will sell them for $1,500 or $2,000, perhaps for $10,000."

"When?" I asked.

"When the big dealers begin running them. At present they are selling old masters and trying to keep their millionaire American clientele from buying anything except what they sell. You cannot blame them."

"And these others?" I said.

"Who would rather pick up two paintings for $150, and often succeed? They are the salt of the earth. And they are an important following of young American painters, whom they come to understand, believe in and watch their progress upward."

Gihon spoke.

"Evidently," said Gihon, "young painters must depend much on a following of real admirers—and it is their joy. Their pictures are bought on their merits, not on a name which one works up to. In my earlier days, I remember selling to people whose money I was almost ashamed to take."

"Not the czar?" I answered playfully. "Which bought of you first, he or the Emperor of Germany?"

"The latter," said Gihon. "It was purchased through Baron Rodolph von Hegenscheidt from the Salon des Artistes Francais of the year 1900. Count Edouard Raczyski bought a line picture of mine for the czar in the salon of 1903. But I count it a far greater honor," he continued, "to have had my pictures bought by brother painters."

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We were looking at his "Summer at Montigny" before it went to this year's salon (Artistes Francais, Catalogue No. 2,757). It is a very large landscape, midsummer on a gray day. In front of the old French town is the quiet, deep river, the waterfall and little mill race beside the old inn. Gihon is sentimental, and rather like Constable or George Inness, although he saw nothing of their works until recent years. The coloring is rich, with nothing impressionist about it, with Gihon's admired technique and strong brush work. In a word, sweet, quiet, restful landscape, rather Barbizonic in temperament, without being of the school.

"The greatest pleasure a painter can have is to be bought by other painters," said Gihon. "Certainly, we buy of each other. And then it is often different from the usual haggle—the buyer wants to raise the price, and the seller wants to lower it! Alexander Harrison, Herbert W. Faulkner, Harry Watrous, Robert W. Van Boskerck, V. D. Hecht (my pupil), Emile Tolman, Harold Hartt, Gen. Samuel Cragin, Paul Dupuy and the great Cazin have bought pictures of mine from exhibitions or the studio. I only desired the honor of their acceptance gratis; but they would not."

"A charming contrast to ignorant millionaires," I suggested.

"Millionaires are also good," replied Gihon, judiciously, "and all are not ignorant, by a jugful."

From which I perceived that the great American appreciation has begun, all along the line!

STERLING HEILIG.

Difficult Problem Is Solved by the Day Nursery

ANY one who has had occasion to pass a certain house on 3d street southeast may have wondered in passing whether he was looking at some new kind of school, where all the studies were games, or whether it was merely the home of an unusually large and healthy family. At almost any hour of a fine day from ten to twenty little rosy-cheeked children may be seen playing in the side yard of 408 3d street southeast. But it is neither a school nor a family, although it more nearly resembles the latter. It is the day nursery of Providence Hospital, and it solves an old and difficult problem.

What is the mother of two or three youngsters going to do with them when she must go out to work by the day? Often has this question arisen. Perhaps the sudden death of the head of a family forces the widow to seek employment, even though she has children who need her care. Or the labor of a father may not be sufficiently well paid to meet all the household requirements. In either of these cases the children must be taken care of during the day.

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There is danger, both physical and moral, for the child who is allowed to play in the streets, and if he is shut up in an otherwise deserted house he becomes lonesome and his physical and mental state of health is apt to suffer from the seclusion. The question is sometimes answered by hiring at a nominal sum an older child of some neighbor to keep watch over the young ones, or the latter are allowed to visit a neighbor for the day. The former method is not always feasible and the latter plan palls upon even the kindest neighbor in time.

The day nursery of Providence Hospital is a place where children can be left for the day and their mother can work secure in the knowledge that at the end of her day's task they will be returned to her glowing with a day's healthy play and clean in body and mind.

It is just across the street from the hospital itself, and is a modest little frame five-room building with a large yard. Its motto is "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," and it believes in fresh air, sunshine and wholesome food, all administered in allopathic doses. Everything about the place has a freshly swept, newly painted air. The building itself is a light tan, with dark green blinds, and the yard is surrounded by a whitewashed fence, except in front, where a lawn slopes down to a picket fence.

The front room downstairs is the reception room, and here the sewing classes are held. The dining room is in the middle of the house and contains a long table about a foot high, surrounded by chairs which appeared to be of at least six inches elevation. In the rear is the kitchen.

CHILDREN OF THE DAY NURSERY.

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All the food is furnished free to the children. Breakfast, at 7:30, consists usually of fruit, oatmeal, eggs, toast and coffee. At noon a dinner of soup, meat, vegetables and milk or coffee is served. Supper, at 4:30 or 5, is made up of meat, vegetables, bread and milk.

The front room upstairs is used as a playroom on cold or rainy days, and in the back room there are four beds where the child who becomes tired of play may take a nap. When a child is brought to the nursery in the morning he is first undressed and given clothes which are furnished by the hospital. These clothes are not of the same pattern, but are individual and are made in different colors and styles. If it is the youngster's first visit to the nursery he is rebellious, perhaps, and does not want his mother to leave him. She, too, entertains some misgivings on the subject, but finally departs reluctantly. When the child is left alone, however, his attention is soon attracted by the other children, his tears cease and soon he is romping around with them. At 12 o'clock sharp he comes tearing in with a longshoreman's appetite.

At present about twenty children are being left daily at the nursery, the youngest being six months old and the oldest ten years. The children of school age go directly from the nursery to school and return there after studies are over to wait for their mothers. Should any of them be taken sick during the day a physician is summoned from the hospital across the way, and the hospitalais also called upon to furnish milk of a proper composition for the bottle-fed babies.

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The nursery is opened at 6:30 in the morning and closes at 6 in the evening, none of the children remaining on the premises during the night. Some of the children are called for as early as 3:15 o'clock in the evening, when their older brothers and sisters get out of school, but most of them remain until after supper, and are delivered to their mothers at about 5 or 5:30 o'clock.

The children are in charge of a member of the hospital staff, who watches over their physical and moral welfare. Any tendency to roughness or danger in their play is quickly checked. Even during the nurse's daily two hours off duty she exerts an influence over them, for the hospital building is just over the way, and should any child evince a desire to climb a tree, slide down the front terrace or indulge in any other forbidden pastime, it is only necessary for the maid or one of the other children to say, "Look out, sister's peeking out of the window over there," and he immediately becomes a model child.

Sister Berchmanns visits the nursery two or three times a week, and is known to the children as "Santa Claus," owing to a pleasant habit she has of bearing toys with her. These are usually donated by the Ladies' Guild of the hospital.

A feature of the day nursery which is becoming more and more popular is the Providence Mothers' Sewing Club. This meets in the day nursery every Thursday afternoon from 1:30 until 4 o'clock. Here any woman of over sixteen years of age who does not know how to sew may receive instruction in that art. Some inquiry is, of course, made into her character, but this society, like everything about the day nursery, is absolutely free and non-sectarian.

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Thirty-two women are now taking advantage of this club every week. Some of them were present at its inception, about nine months ago. At that time they were unable to run a straight seam, but now they are making all their own clothes. All the materials used are furnished absolutely free by the hospital, but none of them may be taken home until they are made into a complete garment of some kind. Many of the mothers attending this society have made themselves complete dresses, winter and summer suits, shirts for their husbands and various clothes for their children. While the mothers sew, the children play in the yard, so that Thursday afternoon is a pretty busy time at the nursery, as the usual number of children is much increased.

On Saturday afternoons, at the same hour, a similar society meets for the benefit of young girls between the ages of ten and sixteen. Between forty and fifty (forty-eight were present at the last meeting) attend regularly. They come from all parts of the city.

The day nursery was formerly situated at 1st and F streets southeast, but moved to its present location five weeks ago. At present it is about equal to the demand upon it, but should this increase, the intention is to enlarge proportionately.

Qualified.

DR. HARVEY W. WILEY said the other day of a canning concern:

"These people, when we objected to some of the poisonous chemicals they used in their canned peas and asparagus, laughed at us. They said we were ignorant and inexperienced. They pointed out that they had been many years in business and that they turned out many millions of cans a year.

"It reminded me of a woman whom I once saw, in my young days, feeding a babe a few months old on bits of fried fish and pickle.

"'Don't do that,' I said. 'Don't do that, madam! It's most unhealthy to give fish and pickle to so young a child.'

"The woman frowned upon me.

"'Huh,' she said, 'don't you try to teach me how to feed babies. Why, young feller, I've buried seven!'"

To Domesticate Humming Birds

ARMED with a permit from the state of Massachusetts to catch 100 humming birds this summer, Miss Katherine E. Dolbear, a student at Clark University, at Worcester, Mass., will try to domesticate these little birds, and in so doing will bestow a boon on the greenhouses; for if domesticated the birds will be set loose in greenhouses to take care of the insects that infest plants, and to aid in cross-fertilization.

Miss Dolbear has already done some important work with humming birds, but this summer her little captives—the full hundred if she is able to snare that many—will be watched in cages big enough to include small trees and many growing flowers. The university has given Miss Dolbear space for her experiments, and already flower seeds have been planted in the cages so that the birds may be studied under as natural conditions as possible. It is of greatest importance, if the birds are to be domesticated, that they breed in captivity, and this especially Miss Dolbear will work for this summer.

Previous to this time Miss Dolbear has watched three birds in captivity and studied their food and habits. She gave them spiders and pomace flies to eat, raising the flies herself from decaying fruit, and discovered that a tiny bird weighing only four grams could eat ten grams of honey a day. She also discovered that the bird slept with its long beak pointed in the air instead of tucked under its wing in the manner of most birds.

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All of her birds, she says, had a decided individuality and one daintily took its bath every morning from a gladiola blossom. "Outdoors you will find these birds bathing on the dew-drops on the leaves," she said.

The manner in which Miss Dolbear enticed these three birds to walk into her parlor sounds almost like a fairy tale. Noticing a bird flying about among the flowers, she put a bottle of sweet water in the garden, with a nasturtium serving as a stopper for the bottle. In a short time the bird discovered the sweet feast, and sunk its bill deep down in the blossom into the bottle. Then Miss Dolbear began to gradually tear off the petals of the blossom, until the day arrived when the bottle was left without its flower stopper. But the humming bird had learned by this time that sweetened water was in the bottle, and went unhesitatingly to it for its drink. Then the bottle was removed to a window sill, and the bird followed it there.

At last the bottle was brought inside the room and the bird came in and became a captive. The process is called taming by the "bottle habit."

In connection with this bottle habit, Miss Dolbear conducted a little experiment as much for her own pleasure as for any scientific value it might possess.

She put four bottles on the window sill, each with a different kind of sweetened water. The bird tried them all, decided he liked the honey water best, and on all subsequent trips passed scornfully over the other bottles until he came to his honey and water concoction.

The tremendous strength of the breast muscles in comparison with its size is one of the observations which Miss Dolbear made of her captive birds, this muscular strength being needed for the constant fluttering which the bird keeps up in order to maintain its balance when sipping honey from a flower.

This fluttering, by the way, is kept up at such a speed that at present there is no camera quick enough to catch it, so humming bird pictures taken when the bird is poised over a flower are invariably blurred and indistinct.

The difficulties which Miss Dolbear will meet in catching her birds this summer are many. They are so fragile that she dares not commission any one to snare them for her, for fear the tiny bird will be crushed by a clumsily managed net.

"And the birds are far too scarce," she says, "for a single little life even to be sacrificed."

The ruby-throated species is the only kind east of the Mississippi, although there are about 500 kinds on this continent. There are none at all in the other continent.

High winds, a sudden cold wave, or a sharp rainstorm is often fatal to the little birds, and these things account somewhat for their rarity. But commercial purposes are also exterminating them, for in South America their bright feathers are used for gay picture cards, and in Mexico they are being killed in order that their feathers may be sent to France for the manufacture of dainty, wonderful shoes.

The birds begin to go north in the middle of May, and it is in that month that Miss Dolbear hopes to get the greatest number. Although the little things are frail, they often fly as far north as Labrador.

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In spite of the fact that Miss Dolbear has been advised that it will be practically impossible to produce any new species of permanence, she is determined to try this thing at least, for she reasons that if there are 500 species it ought to be possible to so breed them that new species will be forthcoming.

"I know hybrids are not fertile," she says, "but I have visions of reproducing at least one more beautiful species."

This work with humming birds is not Miss Dolbear's first experience with birds, for since she was a little girl she has been petting and watching all the members of the feathered creation that she can find. Her father, the late Adolph E. Dolbear of Tufts College, a noted physicist, encouraged her to study the birds in a scientific as well as an esthetic way, and she tells with delight of the chewink that used to come and take breakfast with the family every morning, his saucer being placed on the table with crumbs in it.

"We used to talk, and he'd talk," Miss Dolbear says, "and when his little family got big enough he used to bring them along, although he never would let them come in—always made them stay just outside the window."

And then she tells of the owl that became so tame it would follow her about from room to room like a dog, lighting on her chair when she sat down, cuddling down in her hand and pinching it so in an excess of affection that she had to urge it to hop off.

She has also experimented with bats and has had them hang gently to one finger while she was writing, or pry inquisitively around in her desk. Little monkeys she has also made companions, learning some of their words so that she could talk with them.

The domestication of the humming bird, however, is to be her next important work, and she hopes to be as successful in this as Prof. Hodge, also of Clark University, has been in his task of domesticating the quail.

NEW SUMMER DANCING FROCKS FOR GIRLS

THE daintiest and most fairylike dresses imaginable are being made for dancing occasions of flowered white bobbinette. One such, built on a white satin foundation, having the three-inch hem falling longer than the slip and laid over a band of white satin ribbon, which gives body to the diaphanous material, is very pretty and youthful. The full skirt is gathered in empire style to a white satin cord, and overlaps the kimono waist made of half-inch tucks. Fine plaitings of plain white bobbinette finish the round neck and elbow sleeves, and a white ribbon rosette closes the belt at the back.

The dressy French handmade dancing dresses are a good investment, with their several parts of fine tucking, lace and hand embroidery assembled so skillfully.

Many mothers with sufficient leisure can make very charming imitations of the imported dresses, and thus escape the heavy duty, and just now they are being made of handkerchief linen, point d'esprit, or, newest of all, the plain filet net, to be worn over messaline or China silk slips of pink, blue, yellow, white or even black, this last being a fad to throw the exquisite handwork into relief, for the colored ribbons obviate any look of mourning, and the effect is smart, with black stockings and pumps. Motifs and insertions of baby Irish and val lace enrich the development of these dainty dresses, and a new way of introducing tucking is to set a cluster of narrow tucks on top of broad tucks. The new tub silks and crepes make ideal dancing frocks, and the flowered taffeta dresses require little trimming.